



# **Turkey's Current 'Process': Views from the Diaspora**

November 2013





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Democratic  
Progress  
Institute

November 2013



Published by  
Democratic Progress Institute  
11 Guilford Street  
London WC1N 1DH  
United Kingdom

**[www.democraticprogress.org](http://www.democraticprogress.org)**  
**[info@democraticprogress.org](mailto:info@democraticprogress.org)**  
+44 (0)203 206 9939

First published, 2013

ISBN: 978-1-905592-82-5

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## Foreword

As part of DPI's larger project outlining perceptions of the current 'process' in Turkey, it has sought to engage with groups representing the views of the Kurdish and Turkish diaspora in Europe. This report aims to present the perspectives of these diaspora communities in relation to recent developments in Turkey, focusing in particular on key issues of concern, including language rights and constitutional reform. The report also examines the role that diaspora can play in the resolution of the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey, and looks ahead to possible next steps that can be taken to this end.



Kerim Yildiz

Director

Democratic Progress Institute

## Introduction

Whilst the meaning of 'diaspora' is discussed below, it is acknowledged that the term in itself is not uncontested and remains somewhat controversial "since there is no commonly accepted definition of what a diaspora is".<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this assessment, however, the Shain and Barth definition of diaspora as "a people with a common origin who reside, more or less on a permanent basis, outside the borders of their ethnic or religious homeland"<sup>2</sup> is assumed to adequately encompass both the Turkish and Kurdish diaspora communities in Europe.

The methodology for the assessment consists of desk-based research and face-to-face semi-structured interviews conducted in Brussels, six locations in Germany, and London during October, November, and December 2013. Whilst the majority of individuals and organisations with whom DPI met identify as Kurdish, representatives of the Turkish, Armenian, Assyrian, Alevi, and Yezidi communities were also interviewed in an attempt to reach as broad a cross-section of views as possible. Every effort has been made to ensure that the opinions canvassed in preparing the assessment are accurately reflected in the report and where requests for anonymity were made, these have been complied with.

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1 B Baser and A Swain 'Diasporas as Peacemakers: Third Party Mediation in Homeland Conflicts' (2008) Vol. 25.3 *International Journal on World Peace* 7-28, 8.

2 Y Shain and A Barth 'Diasporas and International Relations Theory' (2003) Vol. 57.3 *International Organization* 449-479, 452.

Diaspora populations from conflict regions have traditionally been thought of as having a negative influence on the dynamics of peace and conflict in their countries of origin due to their potentially holding views which can be considered more 'radical' than those faced with the everyday consequences of violent conflict. Recent research, however, shows that diaspora groups may play prominent roles in reconciliation processes and post-conflict reconstruction initiatives and can contribute in various ways to peace-building in order "to create structures and mechanisms to ensure not only compliance with the terms of an [peace] agreement but a radical rebuilding of a more peaceful structure"<sup>3</sup>. Despite the prevalent perspective in the literature regarding the potential for diasporas to perpetuate conflict,<sup>4</sup> certainly, in the context of the interviews conducted in the preparation of this assessment, the predominant viewpoint is that the opinions of the diaspora with regard to the current peace process are very much shaped and influenced by the discourse emerging from the 'homeland', rather than the reverse situation whereby diaspora groups might seek to impact the trajectory of the process. Kurds in the diaspora and Kurds in the homeland have, as one interviewee put it, "mutual goals."<sup>5</sup>

This assessment will first examine the meaning of diaspora and will

3 J Bercovitch 'A Neglected Relationship: Diasporas and Conflict Resolution' in H Smith and P Stares (eds) *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace-makers or Peace-wreckers?* (2001: United Nations University Press) 17-39, at 34.

4 See E Østergaard-Nielsen 'Diasporas and Conflict Resolution – Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?' Paper presented at seminar on 'Diaspora and Conflict, Peace Builders or Peace Wreckers?' *Danish Institute for International Studies* (DIIS), 8 December 2005, available at <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?id=16804&lng=en> (accessed 1 December 2013), noting that the dominant position in the literature highlights "the dark side of diaspora politics".

5 Interview with Derwesh Ferho Kurdish Cultural Institute, Brussels, 14 October 2013. Transcript on file with author.



outline the nature of the Turkish and Kurdish diasporas in Europe; it will then address the issues highlighted by interviewees as being of concern in relation to the peace process and will consider the role, if any, the diaspora can have in conflict resolution.

## **The Meaning of Diaspora: The Kurdish and Turkish Diaspora in Europe**

The etymological roots of the word 'diaspora' lie in the Greek word *diaspeirein* ('disperse'), from *dia* ('across') and *speirein* ('scatter'). The term, as the Oxford English dictionary notes, originated in the Septuagint (Deuteronomy 28:25) in the phrase *esē diaspora en pasais basileias tēs gēs* ('thou shalt be a dispersion in all kingdoms of the earth') referring to the dispersal of the Jews beyond Israel. Although the term gained more popular usage than that associated with Jews, until about 1968 its traditional application was limited to certain of the dispersed peoples of the world: "It referred to a *people or historical collectivity*, defined in terms at once historical... and religious (or ethno-religious). It was used most often when a people referred itself to a myth of origin, whether positive (Greek antiquity, Chinese culture) or negative (the original catastrophes of the Jews and Armenians). It often implied reference to a place of origin vested with an almost sacred value, one that was in most cases linked to the catastrophe at the origin of dispersion."<sup>6</sup>

The number of diaspora communities, as well as what are referred

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6 D Schnapper (transl. DL Davis) 'From the Nation-State to the Transnational World: On the Meaning and Usefulness of Diaspora as a Concept' (1999) Vol. 8.3 *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 225-254, at 226 (references omitted).

to as 'transnational' communities rose steadily over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and both Kurdish and Turkish diaspora groups can be said to fit within what has been described as an 'ethnonational' diaspora category.<sup>7</sup> Ethnonational diaspora groups, as Sheffer observes, are "much better organised, which enables them to act more efficiently, and their connections to their real or perceived original homelands are more constant and intensive. Their involvement in their homelands' cultural, social, political, and economic affairs and in the affairs of various hostlands where their brethren reside are noteworthy. Some members of such diasporas consider a return, or actually do return, to their homelands... *On various occasions, they are involved in conflicts in or pertaining to their homelands and to other states that host their brethren. Diasporans are also more involved than members of transnational entities in aggressive, criminal, and even terrorist activities.*"<sup>8</sup> For these reasons it is therefore unlikely that, despite the continuing process of globalisation, these groups will become fully integrated or assimilated, a point which was reflected in the observation of the Turkish Association of Berlin that far more people demonstrate on the streets on issues such as the Gezi Park protests than on issues that directly affect the lives of migrants in Germany.<sup>9</sup> This was echoed by another contributor who pointed to the fact that continued involvement of diaspora communities in the conflict in Turkey has prevented them from

7 See G Sheffer 'Transnationalism and Ethnonational Diasporism' (2006) Vol. 15.1 *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 121-145.

8 Sheffer (2006) 129, emphasis added.

9 Interview with representative of the Turkish Association, Berlin, 4 November 2013. Interview on file with author.

focusing on problems specific to migrant communities in Germany and further has prevented a more cohesive approach by Turkish and Kurdish to issues of broader concern to migrants.<sup>10</sup>

Opinions vary as to the precise number of Kurds living in the European diaspora; in 1995 the Kurdish Institute in Paris estimated the number to be at 850,000, with a further 25,000 in North America<sup>11</sup> whereas a more recent publication suggests the number in Europe is as high as 1.5 million.<sup>12</sup> Kurds from Turkey began emigrating to Germany, Benelux countries, Austria, Switzerland and France in the 1960s initially “under contracts based on inter-government agreements regarding immigrant labour.”<sup>13</sup> As a result of the conflict and the forced evacuation of villages in southeast Turkey, Kurdish emigration accelerated from the late 1980s onwards. Wahlbeck outlines, for example, that in the UK there was a major influx of Turkish nationals who applied for asylum in 1989 (4,650), a significant number of whom were Kurdish, who were emigrating “due to the increasingly violent conflict in eastern Turkey, continuous human rights violations and various political, social and economic reasons.”<sup>14</sup> This immigration of what Demir refers to as “ethno-politically mobilised Kurds” led to

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10 Interview with representative of KOMKAR, Berlin, 4 November 2013. Transcript on file with author.

11 See ‘The Kurdish Diaspora’ *Fondation Institut Kurde de Paris*, available at <http://institutkurde.org/en/kurdorama> (accessed 2 December 2013).

12 I Kurt ‘Kurdish Diaspora Cannot be Ignored’ *Al Monitor* 25 March 2013, available at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/03/kurdish-diaspora-cannot-be-ignored.html> (accessed 1 December 2013).

13 ‘The Kurdish Diaspora’ (*Fondation Institut Kurde de Paris*)

14 Ö Wahlbeck ‘Community work and Exile Politics: Kurdish Refugee Associations in London’ (1998) Vol. 11.3 *Journal of Refugee Studies* 215-230, 217.

the establishment of a number of organisations in London with the aim of “making claims for Kurdish rights in Turkey, expressing their desire for the recognition of their ethnic identity.”<sup>15</sup> The number of Kurds currently in the UK is estimated at between 180,000 and 200,000.<sup>16</sup>

The story of Turkish migration to Western European countries began in the late 1950s and early 1960s when many European governments encouraged ‘guest workers’ to aid in the rebuilding of post-war Europe. Although many labour migrants emigrated with the intention of returning home, “only a handful of people returned to Turkey despite incentives on the part of many host governments to send them back. The idea of returning to Turkey turned out to be only a myth and Turkish migrant population in Europe increased year by year through family unions, marriages and undocumented migration.”<sup>17</sup> Figures published in 2007 indicated that there were 4.5 million Turks living in Europe, with the majority having become settled and naturalised citizens in their countries of residence, “no longer migrants but an integral part of the wider society either as citizens or permanent residents.”<sup>18</sup>

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15 I Demir ‘Batling with *Memleket* in London: The Kurdish Diaspora’s Engagement with Turkey’ (2012) Vol. 38.5 *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 815-831, 818.

16 Demir (2012) 817.

17 T Küçükcan ‘Bridging the European Union and Turkey: The Turkish Diaspora in Europe’ (2007) Vol. 9.4 *Insight Turkey* 85-99, 86-7 (references omitted).

18 Küçükcan (2007) 87.

## Issues of Concern and the Role of the Diaspora in Conflict Resolution

It has been suggested that the Kurdish diaspora “is not only radical, but also has no confidence in Ankara... The bloody suppression of Kurdish rebellions throughout history and the fact that the PKK’s eight unilateral truces since 1993 have been sabotaged in this or that way has opened a confidence rift between Ankara and the already reactive diaspora. The diaspora has no trust in the state today. It is uneasy also over Ocalan’s settlement project because of his status as a prisoner. An actor to be reckoned with, *the Kurdish diaspora is equally capable of giving birth to or spoiling peace.*”<sup>19</sup> Whilst it is difficult to disagree with the sentiment expressed here that there is little trust of the Turkish State amongst the Kurdish diaspora, the idea that the diaspora is ‘radical’ and ‘reactive’ is arguably overstated. The interviews conducted in the preparation of this report did not, for example, reveal that the demands of the Kurdish diaspora in terms of an eventual solution are any greater (or less) than those expressed by those living in the Kurdish region of Turkey and presented with the immediate consequences of conflict on a continuing basis. In fact it was suggested that the diaspora is very supportive of the process and is careful not to do anything that might negatively influence it.<sup>20</sup> Overall, the issues of concern as relayed by the majority of interviewees can be said to align very closely with those highlighted by those Turkish and

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19 Kurt (2013).

20 Interview with Murat Cakir, columnist with *Ozgur Politika* newspaper, Frankfurt, 31 October 2013. Transcript on file with author.

Kurdish respondents in the DPI assessment conducted in July-August 2013, and are considered in the following sections.

## **Language rights**

Although the democratisation package announced at the end of September 2013 provided for the provision of education in languages other than Turkish in private schools and ended the prohibition on the use of the letters x, q, and w in official documents, these measures were not met with any great enthusiasm amongst the diaspora members interviewed in the preparation of this report, almost all of whom were critical of the failure to extend the right to mother tongue education to public schools. The reforms instituted by the package announced in September were described by all contributors as insufficient, with one contributor making the important point that the remaining issues in Turkey relating to fundamental rights and liberties are not only specific to the Kurdish question but rather need to be applied for all, suggesting that even the use of the term 'democratisation package' is "disturbing; these are not concessions to be granted but rather rights that should be guaranteed by any State."<sup>21</sup> The importance of mother tongue education as an issue of concern cannot be overstated and the continuing denial of public education in languages other than Turkish was highlighted by a number of respondents as being a central component in order to move the peace process forward. Prime Minister Erdoğan, during a visit to Berlin in 2008, suggested that Turkish-medium schools could be founded in Germany, asserting that "for immigrants to

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Dr Bahadır Kalegasi, TUSIAD (Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association), Brussels, 14 October 2013.

speak better German, they have to be able to speak their own mother tongue first.”<sup>22</sup> That the Prime Minister should advocate for mother-tongue education in Germany, while at the same time failing to provide it domestically, was highlighted by a number of interviewees as being highly contradictory.

## **Constitutional reform**

The continuing failure of the government to oversee the brokering of a new civilian-authored constitution emerged as a source of concern among members of both the Kurdish and Turkish diaspora communities consulted in the preparation of this report. Lahdo Hobil, President of the European Syriac Union, emphasised the need for a new constitution to acknowledge all different identities if it wishes to be democratic: “Turkey must accept all ethnic groups”, he noted, “the peace process cannot succeed otherwise.”<sup>23</sup> The idea that constitutional reform in Turkey is much broader than the Kurdish issue yet a *sine qua non* of any eventual resolution to the Kurdish question was one that was reflected by a number of interviewees. Yet now, due to the apparent failure of the Constitutional Reconciliation Commission to reach agreement, the fact that constitutional reform has to some extent been grafted on to the peace process is arguably counterproductive; on the one hand masking the fact that constitutional reform in Turkey is but one element of a broader ‘democratisation’ process that applies to all citizens, and on the other, adding further pressure to a peace

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22 See ‘Erdogan Proposes Turkish-Medium High Schools for Germany’ *Der Spiegel* 8 February 2008.

23 Interview with Lahdo Hobil, European Syriac Union, Brussels, 15 October 2013.

process that is already grappling with complex questions. The legal process of constitutional reform, as one commentator noted, has been “blocked” due to the seeming failure of the Constitution Reconciliation Commission.<sup>24</sup> It now remains to be seen whether the political process is any more successful.

## **Importance of the Regional Context**

As with the interviews conducted for the DPI assessment in July-August 2013, the current broader geopolitical context of the Middle East is an issue that was cited by almost all of the participants in the research as exerting a key influence on the peace process. For those very critical of the current government, events in Syria and the *de facto* Kurdish state in Northern Iraq have in fact forced the government into addressing the Kurdish issue within its own borders as a consequence of the failings of Turkish foreign policy.<sup>25</sup> As one observer noted, the “failure of Turkey’s Middle East Strategy has forced Turkey to address the Kurdish issue.”<sup>26</sup>

## **The Diaspora and Conflict Resolution**

The influence of diaspora communities on conflicts can arguably be said to increase as advances in global mobility and communication systems become ever more prevalent. As group identities become much less “territorially bounded” the “political weight” of diaspora

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24 Interview with Dilek Kurban, Researcher, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin, 4 November 2013.

25 Interview with Huseyin Mat- Chairman AABF - Federation of European Alewite Unions, Cologne, 1 November 2013.

26 Interview with Estella Schmid, Peace in Kurdistan Campaign, London, 3 December 2013.



communities in intra-State conflict increases.<sup>27</sup> Diaspora political interventions in conflicts in their countries of origin are, as Østergaard-Nielsen notes, a “multidimensional phenomenon” and may take a number of forms, including but not limited to, economic and political support.<sup>28</sup> Economic support may take the form of collection of funds among the European diaspora communities for the financing of conflict and in the Kurdish context has been an important source of funding for PKK military activities in Turkey and “to sustain the transnational organisational infrastructure of the organisation.”<sup>29</sup> Political support can take both direct and indirect forms; directly “through networks and interchange of opinions and knowledge with actors in the homeland or, when possible, participate in the democratic solution to a conflict in their country of origin through participation in advisory councils or governments of transitions” and indirectly through the mobilisation of “political support among the population and policy makers in their countries of residence or among international organisations.”<sup>30</sup> Here, the experience of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe is particularly instructive and a large number of contributors to this report when asked about the role of the diaspora in relation to the conflict felt that lobbying of European governments and education of European populations in terms of the Kurdish conflict was a crucial aspect of their work. A representative of the Kurdistan National Congress (KNK) in Brussels described their role thus: “A major part of the

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27 J Demmers ‘Diaspora and Conflict: locality, long-distance nationalism, and delocalisation of conflict dynamics’ (2002) Vol. 9.1 *The Public* 85-96, 95.

28 E Østergaard-Nielsen (2005) 4-5.

29 E Østergaard-Nielsen (2005) 5.

30 E Østergaard-Nielsen (2005) 5.

role of the diaspora in Europe is to educate people about Kurds and dispel the perceptions created by States that we are 'terrorists'. We need to engage in peoples' diplomacy."<sup>31</sup> Songul Karabulut of the European Democratic Society Congress (KCDE) echoed this sentiment, noting that the role of the diaspora was to raise awareness, share aspirations and promote knowledge of and educate regarding the situation in Turkey<sup>32</sup>, whereas another interviewee added that there is a responsibility also to create dialogue between the various diaspora groups.<sup>33</sup>

In considering the role of diasporas in conflict and conflict resolution it is also important that we do not over-generalise. Smith cautions against this, suggesting that "diasporas play varied roles in conflict; and different groups and individuals within the same diaspora may have different approaches, organisations, interests and objectives within the same conflict."<sup>34</sup> Considering the activities of the Kurdish diaspora, however, it can be seen it has successfully organised along political lines in Europe: "The European system offered new political opportunities to the Diaspora through supranational power centers such as the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Court of Justice, the Council of Europe, and the European

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31 Interview with Remzi Kartel, former Member of the Turkish Parliament, Brussels, 14 October 2013. Transcript on file with author.

32 Interview with Songul Karabulut of the European Democratic Society Congress (KCDE) (formerly KON-KURD), Brussels 15 October 2013.

33 Interview with representative of Kurdistan National Congress (KNK), Brussels, 14 October 2013. Transcript on file with author.

34 H Smith 'Diasporas in international conflict' in Smith and Stares (eds) (2001) 3-17, at 9.

Court of Human Rights. Instead of solely targeting Turkish and select European government officials with protest activities on the local and national levels, activists simultaneously pursued Kurdish political, cultural, and human rights on the supranational level. Their strategy was to create friction between the EU and Turkey that would ultimately generate social and political reform in the Turkish domestic arena if Turkey hoped to gain entry into the EU.”<sup>35</sup> It would therefore appear that the approach of the Kurdish diaspora has, in part, been to try to encourage the necessary reforms that might eliminate of the underlying causes of the conflict. A number of participants stressed the need for the diaspora to do even more in terms of lobbying their governments to further address the Kurdish question in Turkey, with one noting that the diaspora is not as effective in this regard as it potentially could be.<sup>36</sup> The limits to what the Kurdish and Turkish diaspora can do to actually influence the current process were also outlined by a number of participants in the assessment, with one observer noting that “the content of the negotiations is not determined by the public” and cautioning that “if the process continues as such there will be no basis for agreement in society.”<sup>37</sup>

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35 V Eccarius-Kelly ‘Political Movements and Leverage Points: Kurdish Activism in the European Diaspora’ (2002) Vol. 22.1 *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 91-118, 92.

36 Interview with Dr Özlem Galip, Halkevi Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre, London, 2 December 2013. Transcript on file with author.

37 Interview with Ferda Cetin, Sterk TV, Denderleuw, Belgium, 14 October 2013. Transcript on file with author.

## Trajectory of the process: necessary next steps

A number of the misgivings voiced by the diaspora groups regard the current process centre on the nature and structure of that process, which, it is suggested, “suffers from a lack of methodology.”<sup>38</sup> One of the main reasons for what is viewed as a stalemate in the process currently is, as one observer noted, “the failure to discuss what an eventual resolution would look like”<sup>39</sup> or, as another pointed out, “the treatment of the process as a short-term strategy, rather than a long-term vision and failing to address the core issues.”<sup>40</sup> The process, as one observer noted, is also “suffering from domestic politicking and not enough international support.”<sup>41</sup>

Overall, it can be said that the views of the diaspora groups consulted in the preparation of this report in terms of what is now necessary to move the peace process forward align to a large extent with those of the people living in the Kurdish region of Turkey. These include constitutional reform and the necessity of a root and branch reform of the constitution was emphasised by many interviewees, with some suggesting that the approach taken by the government to this issue needs to be more open. A new constitution should, in the view of many interviewees, give legal protection to the language and cultural rights of the Kurds. The release of prisoners detained

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38 Interview with representative of the Belgium Armenian Democrats Association, Brussels, 15 October 2013. Transcript on file with author.

39 Interview with Ferda Cetin, Sterk TV, Denderleuw, Belgium, 14 October 2013. Transcript on file with author.

40 Interview with Dr Bilgin Ayata, Researcher, Center for Transnational Studies, Foreign and Security Policy, Freie University Berlin, 5 November 2013.

41 Interview with Dr Bahadır Kalegasi, TUSIAD (Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association), Brussels, 14 October 2013.

for political activity, particularly those arrested as part of the operations against the Union of Kurdistan Communities (KCK) is also seen as fundamental for progress. Interviewees also stressed the need for the process to be overseen by an independent third party. The failure of the government to agree to such a measure is conceived by some as evidence of a lack of sincerity on the part of the government regarding the process with the suggestion that the failure to agree to an independent monitor of the process is an indication that the government is “still reluctant to discuss the Kurdish problem openly as it would legitimise Kurdish demands.”<sup>42</sup> or as “a reflection of an arrogant mentality which suggests that they must make their own model for peace.”<sup>43</sup>

An issue of concern unique to diaspora communities in any conflict resolution process is the prospect of returning to their countries of origin should an eventual solution be found. The ‘right of return’ is usually discussed in the context of Palestinian refugees from 1948 to move and live within the internationally recognised borders of the State of Israel but it can also be relevant in post-conflict societies or indeed as part of a conflict settlement. As noted above, much of the Kurdish migration to Europe from the mid 1980s onwards was as a result of the conflict and so it is unsurprising that the question of Kurds in ‘exile’ featured heavily in many of the interviewees conducted for this report. The reason for migration in many cases, one observer noted, is because of political activities:

42 Interview with Ferda Cetin, Sterk TV, Denderleuw, Belgium, 14 October 2013.

Transcript on file with author.

43 Interview with Serpil Eryilmaz, Editor of WDR’s (German State Radio) Turkish and Kurdish Services Cologne, 31 October 2013. Transcript on file with author.

“if there is to be a successful resolution to the process, Kurds must be able to choose whether to go back.”<sup>44</sup> The reasons cited as preventing people from returning included the appropriation of land by village guards or the fact that a certain number of Kurds left because they were wanted for arrest due to their political activities. It was suggested that the legal basis for these prosecutions must be erased and that these are important factors that need to be dealt with during the resolution process.

## Conclusion

When seeking to draw conclusions about the perceptions of the current process amongst the diaspora groups consulted it is of course important to be cognisant of the fact that the diaspora is not an homogenous group. As one observer noted, the community in the Turkish and Kurdish diaspora are “reflective of divisions domestically”<sup>45</sup> and so the divisions in Turkish and to a lesser extent, Kurdish, politics are as evident in the European diaspora as they are in Turkey.

Nonetheless, we can draw some broad conclusions, not least that during the interviews conducted in Turkey during July 2013 the prevailing sense was one of optimism, which was in contrast to a more pessimistic outlook gleaned from an appraisal of the interviews

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44 Interview with Songul Karabulut of the European Democratic Society Congress (KCDE) (formerly KON-KURD), Brussels 15 October 2013. Transcript on file with author.

45 Interview with Serpil Eryilmaz, Editor of WDR's (German State Radio) Turkish and Kurdish Services Cologne, 31 October 2013. Transcript on file with author.

conducted with members of the Kurdish and Turkish Diaspora communities in Europe during October-December 2013. Whilst there is overwhelming support for the peace process amongst the diaspora communities, the majority of interviewees were pessimistic about the prospects for the current process leading to an eventual solution. The reasons for this are possibly twofold: first, diaspora communities are in a sense a level removed from the conflict and for that reason arguably not as 'invested' as those on the ground; as one Kurdish observer noted, "Kurds in Kurdistan suffer most and have the highest hopes with regard to the process. Kurds in Turkey are more pessimistic and Kurds in Europe are more emotional and sentimental and have unrealistic expectations...diaspora Kurds have no faith in the process."<sup>46</sup> Academic commentary has also suggested that the Kurdish side is more interested in a solution than the Turkish State and that the approach taken thus far by the State has shown "more of an interest in conflict management rather than conflict solution."<sup>47</sup>

The second reason for the seemingly more pessimistic outlook of the diaspora communities is possibly concerned with the question of timing. The interviews conducted in the Kurdish region of Turkey in July took place at a time of great expectation with regard to what the democratisation package, which was due to be announced, would contain. The diaspora assessment on the other hand took place in the aftermath of the package that was

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46 Interview with Ferda Cetin, Sterk TV, Denderleuw, Belgium, 14 October 2013. Transcript on file with author.

47 Interview with Janroj Yilmaz Keles, Research Fellow, Business School, Middlesex University London, London 11 December 2013. Transcript on file with author.

announced at the end of September 2013, and which was generally considered as containing little that would help move the process forward and containing “only cosmetic changes”.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the process was considered by many of the interviewees as being, at the time of research in late 2013, at a stalemate, with little confidence in concrete steps being taken ahead of the municipal elections scheduled for 2014 and general elections in 2015. The government, as one commentator argued, is “buying time in order to enter the election period in a peaceful atmosphere to attract more Kurdish votes.”<sup>49</sup> The question of the upcoming elections was, in fact, highlighted by many as having an important bearing on the process, with the suggestion that the period in the run up to the elections may witness an increase in the polarisation of views as both the government and Kurdish political representation try to increase their vote, and that little of significance will be achieved in the peace process until the elections are over.<sup>50</sup>

Whereas many of the interviewees were pessimistic regarding the current process leading to an eventual solution, a major positive development emerging from the current talks and identified by a number of respondents is that the talks have led to a “change in atmosphere” and a change in perception amongst the Turkish

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48 Interview with Murat Cakir, columnist with *Ozgur Politika* newspaper, Frankfurt, 31 October 2013. Transcript on file with author.

49 Interview with Yilmaz Gunes, ATIK European Confederation of Turkey's Workers, Hannover, 2 November 2013. Transcript on file with author.

50 Interview with Dr Bilgin Ayata, Researcher, Center for Transnational Studies, Foreign and Security Policy, Freie University Berlin, 5 November 2013. Transcript on file with author.



population regarding the Kurds and the conflict.<sup>51</sup> The approach of the State in engaging with the Kurds, and particularly, as many interviewees observed, the recognition of Öcalan as the representative of the Kurdish people, is hugely important because “it means the existence of the Kurdish question can no longer be denied.”<sup>52</sup>

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51 Interview with representative of the Yezidi Foundation, Hannover, 2 November 2013. Transcript on file with author.

52 Interview with Cudi Dabakoğlu, Management Committee, Kurdish Advice Centre, London 3 December 2013. Transcript on file with author.

## **DPI Board and Council of Experts**

### **Director:**

#### **Kerim Yildiz**

Kerim Yildiz is Director of DPI. He is an expert in international human rights law and minority rights, and is the recipient of a number of awards, including from the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights for his services to protect human rights and promote the rule of law in 1996, the Sigrid Rausing Trust's Human Rights award for Leadership in Indigenous and Minority Rights in 2005, and the Gruber Prize for Justice in 2011. Kerim has written extensively on human rights and international law, and his work has been published internationally.

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Head of Research and Director of the School of Law's Research Programme at King's College London and Director of the International State Crime Initiative (ICSI), United Kingdom (a collaborative enterprise with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and the University of Hull, led by King's College London).

## **Priscilla Hayner**

Co-founder of the International Centre for Transitional Justice, global expert and author on truth commissions and transitional justice initiatives, consultant to the Ford Foundation, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and numerous other organisations.

## **Arild Humlen**

Lawyer and Director of the Norwegian Bar Association's Legal Committee. Widely published within a number of jurisdictions, with emphasis on international civil law and human rights. Has lectured at law faculties of several universities in Norway. Awarded the Honor Prize of the Bar Association for Oslo for his work as Chairman of the Bar Association's Litigation Group for Asylum and Immigration law.

## **Jacki Muirhead**

Practice Director, Cleveland Law Firm. Previously Barristers' Clerk at Counsels' Chambers Limited and Marketing Manager at the Faculty of Advocates. Undertook an International Secondment at New South Wales Bar Association.

## **Professor David Petrasek**

Professor of International Political Affairs at the University of Ottawa, Canada. Expert and author on human rights, humanitarian law and conflict resolution issues, former Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of Amnesty International, consultant to United Nations.

## **Antonia Potter Prentice**

Expert in humanitarian, development, peacemaking and peacebuilding issues. Consultant on women, peace and security; and strategic issues to clients including the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, the Global Network of Women Peacemakers, Mediator, and Terre des Hommes.

## **DPI Council of Experts**

### **Dermot Ahern**

Dermot Ahern is a Former Irish Member of Parliament and Government Minister and was a key figure for more than 20 years in the Irish peace process, including in negotiations for the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement. He also has extensive experience at EU Council level including being a key negotiator and signatory to the Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties. In 2005, he was appointed by the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to be a Special Envoy on his behalf on the issue of UN Reform. Previous roles include that of Government Chief Whip, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Justice and Law Reform. Dermot Ahern also served as Co-Chairman of the British Irish Inter Parliamentary Body 1993 – 1997.

## **Dr Mehmet Asutay**

Dr Mehmet Asutay is a Reader in Middle Eastern and Islamic Political Economy and Finance at the School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA), Durham University, UK. He researches, teaches and supervises research on Middle Eastern economic development, the political economy of Middle East including Turkish and Kurdish political economies, and Islamic political economy. He is the Honorary Treasurer of BRISMES (British Society for Middle East Studies) and of the International Association for Islamic Economics. His research has been published in various journals, magazines and also in book format. He has been involved in human rights issues in various levels for many years, and has a close interest in transitional justice, conflict resolution and development issues at academic and policy levels.

## **Christine Bell**

Legal expert based in Northern Ireland; expert on transitional justice, peace negotiations, constitutional law and human rights law advice. Trainer for diplomats, mediators and lawyers.

## **Cengiz Çandar**

Senior Journalist and columnist specializing in areas such as The Kurdish Question, former war correspondent. Served as special adviser to Turkish president Turgut Ozal.

## **Yilmaz Ensaroğlu**

SETA Politics Economic and Social Research Foundation. Member of the Executive Board of the Joint Platform for Human Rights, the Human Rights Agenda Association (İHGD) and Human Rights Research Association (İHAD), Chief Editor of the Journal of the Human Rights Dialogue.

## **Dr. Salomón Lerner Febres**

Former President of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Perú; Executive President of the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights of the Pontifical Catholic University of Perú.

## **Professor Mervyn Frost**

Head of the Department of War Studies, King's College London. Previously served as Chair of Politics and Head of Department at the University of Natal in Durban. Former President of the South African Political Studies Association; expert on human rights in international relations, humanitarian intervention, justice in world politics, democratising global governance, just war tradition in an Era of New Wars and ethics in a globalising world.

## **Martin Griffiths**

Founding member and first Executive Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Served in the British Diplomatic Service, and in British NGOs, Ex -Chief Executive of Action Aid. Held posts as United Nations (UN) Director of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, Geneva and Deputy to the UN

Emergency Relief Coordinator, New York. Served as UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Great Lakes, UN Regional Coordinator in the Balkans and UN Assistant Secretary-General.

### **Dr. Edel Hughes**

Senior Lecturer, University of East London. Expert on international human rights and humanitarian law, with special interest in civil liberties in Ireland, emergency/anti-terrorism law, international criminal law and human rights in Turkey and Turkey's accession to European Union. Previous lecturer with Amnesty International and a founding member of Human Rights for Change.

### **Avila Kilmurray**

A founder member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and was part of the Coalition's negotiating team for the Good Friday Agreement. She has written extensively on community action, the women's movement and conflict transformation. Serves on the Board of Conciliation Resources (UK); the Global Fund for Community Foundations; Conflict Resolution Services Ireland and the Institute for British Irish Studies. Avila was the first Women's Officer for the Transport & General Workers Union for Ireland (1990-1994) and became Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in 1994. Avila was awarded the Raymond Georis Prize for Innovative Philanthropy through the European Foundation Centre.

## **Professor Ram Manikkalingam**

Visiting Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, served as Senior Advisor on the Peace Process to President of Sri Lanka, expert and author on conflict, multiculturalism and democracy, founding board member of the Laksham Kadirgamar Institute for Strategic Studies and International Relations.

## **Bejan Matur**

Renowned Turkey based Author and Poet. Columnist, focusing mainly on Kurdish politics, the Armenian issue, daily politics, minority problems, prison literature, and women's issues. Has won several literary prizes and her work has been translated into 17 languages. Former Director of the Diyarbakır Cultural Art Foundation (DKSV).

## **Professor Monica McWilliams**

Professor of Women's Studies, based in the Transitional Justice Institute at the University of Ulster. Was the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission from 2005 2011 and responsible for delivering the advice on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. Co-founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition political party and was elected to a seat at the Multi-Party Peace Negotiations, which led to the Belfast (Good Friday) Peace Agreement in 1998. Served as a member of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly from 1998-2003 and the Northern Ireland Forum for Dialogue and Understanding from 1996-1998. Publications focus on domestic violence, human security and the role of women in peace processes.



## **Jonathan Powell**

British diplomat, Downing Street Chief of Staff under Prime Minister Tony Blair between 1997- 2007. Chief negotiator in Northern Ireland peace talks, leading to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Currently CEO of Inter Mediate, a United Kingdom -based non-state mediation organization.

## **Sir Kieran Prendergast**

Served in the British Foreign Office, including in Cyprus, Turkey, Israel, the Netherlands, Kenya and New York; later head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office dealing with Apartheid and Namibia; former UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. Convenor of the SG's Executive Committee on Peace and Security and engaged in peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan, Burundi, Cyprus, the DRC, East Timor, Guatemala, Iraq, the Middle East, Somalia and Sudan.

## **Rajesh Rai**

Rajesh was called to the Bar in 1993. His areas of expertise include Human Rights Law, Immigration and Asylum Law, and Public Law. Rajesh has extensive hands-on experience in humanitarian and environmental issues in his work with NGOs, cooperatives and companies based in the UK and overseas. He also lectures on a wide variety of legal issues, both for the Bar Human Rights Committee and internationally.

## **Professor Naomi Roht Arriaza**

Professor at University of Berkeley, United States, expert and author on transitional justice, human rights violations, international criminal law and global environmental issues.

## **Professor Dr. Mithat Sancar**

Professor of Law at the University of Ankara, expert and author on Constitutional Citizenship and Transitional Justice, columnist for Taraf newspaper.



11 Guilford Street  
London WC1N 1DH  
United Kingdom

+44 (0)203 206 9939

[info@democraticprogress.org](mailto:info@democraticprogress.org)

[www.democraticprogress.org](http://www.democraticprogress.org)

Twitter: @DPI\_UK